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Approved For Release 2002/01/30 : CIA-RDP79T00912A002700010024-4

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Africa Review

13 November 1978

Secret

RP AR 78-015
13 November 1978

Approved For Release 2002/01/30 : CIA-RDP79T00912A002700010024-4

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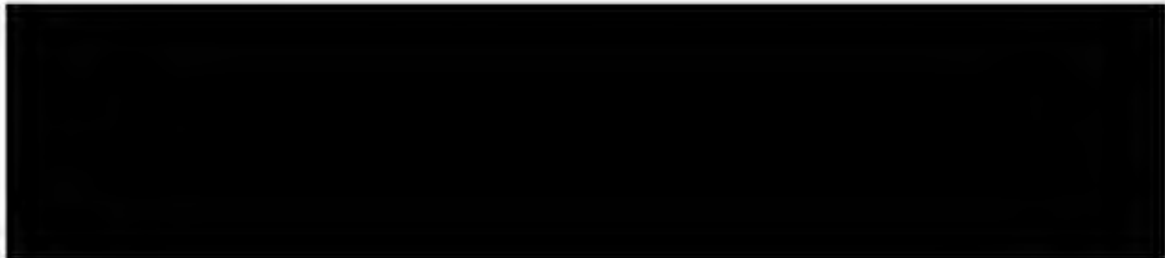
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Guinea-USSR: Patrol Boat Deliveries

Guinea received late last month the first of three used Soviet patrol boats under an agreement that was apparently initiated during a visit to Conakry early this year by Naval Commander in Chief Admiral Gorshkov. The others are to be delivered by the end of the year or in early 1979. Gorshkov's visit was part of recent Soviet efforts to improve relations with Guinea. Relations have gradually cooled following Guinean President Toure's decision in June 1977 to end the use of Conakry for deployment of Soviet TU-95 naval reconnaissance aircraft and to cultivate the West in an effort to attract greater economic aid and investment.

Toure apparently felt compelled to turn to the Soviets for the patrol craft for lack of an alternative. The provision of reconditioned 20-year-old patrol boats is unlikely to go very far toward mollifying the Toure government, which has been dissatisfied for some time with the level and quality of Soviet military aid. The boats--first reported to be a grant--evidently have been sold to Guinea for scarce hard currency, albeit at a low price. The Guineans, reportedly unhappy over the poor condition of the first boat, accepted it reluctantly.

Guinea, which has become the third leading Soviet arms client in West Africa, is trying with little success to gradually diversify its sources of arms to better fill its needs, but without provoking a rupture with the Soviets or losing too many benefits. Toure cannot realistically expect to ease significantly for some time Guinea's dependence on the USSR as its primary arms supplier. Guinea's need to look to the Soviets for essential military aid will continue to dictate that overall relations not be allowed to deteriorate too far.

Little new military aid has been forthcoming from the West. Last August, France did sell Guinea two small landing-type barges, which were converted for patrol use.

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These vessels represent the first military-related assistance to Guinea by the French in 20 years. The receipt of patrol craft from the Soviets, supplemented by those from France, presumably has met for now Guinea's desire to update its aging fleet. US failure to provide new patrol boats--a request made by Toure at the same time Guinea suspended Soviet TU-95 flights--still annoys the President, but the issue has not set back US-Guinean relations, which have become much warmer in the past year.

A deeper irritant in Soviet-Guinean relations than the military supply relationship has been Moscow's failure to provide more economic development assistance to "socialist" Guinea, which remains one of the most backward states of West Africa. For now, Toure seems to have largely written off the Soviets as a source of more aid and investment and has begun to explore assistance possibilities from the United States and other Western countries. To this end, Toure has taken steps to improve Guinea's poor image on human rights issues, adopted somewhat more flexible internal policies, and displayed a more evenhanded and pragmatic foreign policy. As in the military sphere, however, Toure will continue to accept from the Soviet Union economic help that he cannot get elsewhere. (SECRET NOFORN-NOCONTRACT-ORCON)

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Ghana: Government Declares State of Emergency

General Akuffo's five-month-old military government--which has been buffeted in recent weeks by spreading labor strikes for higher wages--last Monday declared a state of emergency in an effort to bring the situation under control. The regime's grip on power is not immediately threatened and there have been no civil disturbances thus far. The state of emergency may give the regime some breathing time, but it is unlikely to put an end to the labor unrest unless the government authorizes substantial wage increases. Additional deficit spending to meet worker demands could in turn seriously jeopardize Ghana's new economic stabilization program which is essential for long-term political stability.

General Akuffo took a tough public line in announcing emergency measures, warning that the government's economic retrenchment policies would not be sacrificed to excessive labor demands. In reality, the regime must tread delicately lest its actions generate more widespread civil disobedience and possible anarchy. The government clearly faces an uphill struggle in trying to keep future wage settlements within austerity guidelines and in achieving higher labor productivity and increased consumer goods on the market at affordable prices.

Striking public employees and civil servants in Accra apparently have paid little heed to the government's call to return to work and seem to be testing the government's political will power. The government has announced that they will be dismissed, but lacking replacement personnel, it may have to accede to part of their demands. This would only encourage other workers to strike. The outlook is for continuing popular dissatisfaction and further labor unrest as the economic situation continues to deteriorate. The average worker now faces a 150-percent increase in prices over the last year and serious shortages of goods.

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Government wage settlements last month with other striking workers have already added \$36 million to the government's new budget. Budgetary austerity is a key part of the government's economic program and a prerequisite for obtaining large loans from the International Monetary Fund and Western donor countries. These loans are needed to help resolve the massive economic problems inherited from the Acheampong regime that was ousted last July. The United Kingdom, the former colonizer and Ghana's chief benefactor, has already reacted favorably to Ghana's new economic program and offered a \$40 million interest-free loan for balance-of-payments support. It is unclear what impact the state of emergency will have on Ghana's efforts to negotiate a standby IMF loan and on West Germany's decision in principle to resume its aid to Ghana. (CONFIDENTIAL)

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